



WELCOME



Welcome to *Transformed Under the Pepper Tree*. In this monthly magazine, you will read stories of how God is changing people's lives at PazNaz, transforming them into the image of Jesus Christ by the power of his Spirit!

You might be asking, "Where can I find information about a specific PazNaz event?" Some information about specific events on campus is found within these pages, but each month *Transformed* is focused on relating stories about what PazNaz is really all about. Rather than programs or events, there are stories about changed lives, stories about people coming in contact with the Savior, and people exploring what it means to become a follower of him. It is exciting to hear what God is doing in the lives of people!

Years ago, Pastor Earl Lee and a group of staff members gathered around a pepper tree located on the northern-most point of what was to become the site for First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena. They dreamed and prayed that God would provide a place where more people could find power for living through Jesus. What began then has been going on for over thirty years as men and women, boys and girls have come into relationship with Christ in significant ways under the shade of that old pepper tree. The mission of the church hasn't changed. May it continue to flourish as people experience the transforming power of Christ.

Blessings,

B. Scott Anderson
Executive Pastor

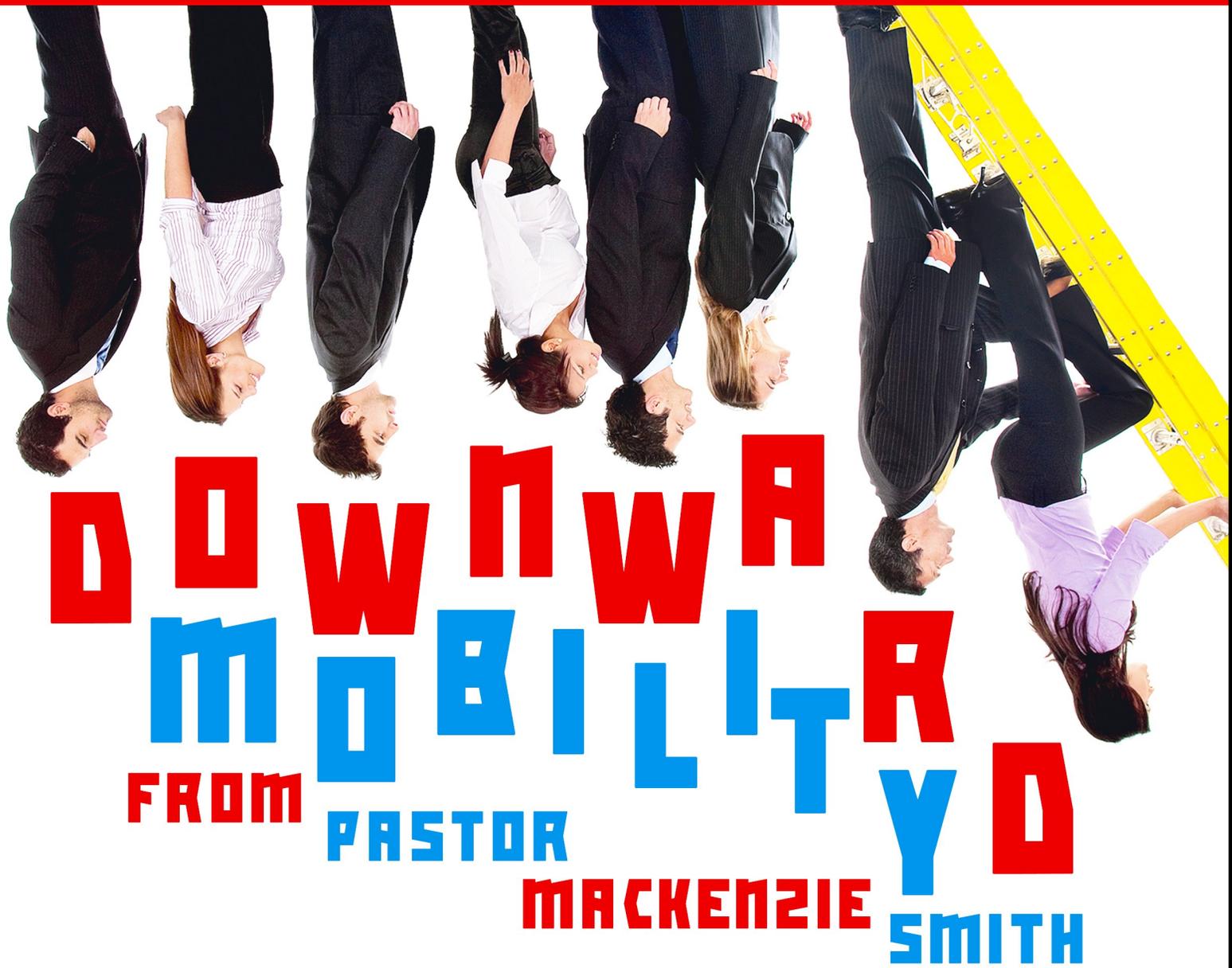
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Transformed is a magazine publication of First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena (PazNaz). It is designed to highlight the Church's stories of personal transformation. For a complete overview of PazNaz, their beliefs, and ministries, please visit the website www.paznaz.org.

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Let me tell you a story you may have heard before. You may have even heard it told exactly like this before! It starts with three very simple, very important words.

IN. THE. BEGINNING.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness covered the ocean that covered everything. God said, "Let there be light," and separated the light from the darkness. God saw that this was rad.

After creating light, God separated the waters. He created a dome, so there were waters above and waters below, but there was space in between the two. God saw that this was also rad.

Then God separated the water and brought the land up, and brought plants out of the land, and God saw that this, too, was rad.

Then God filled the heavens with the sun and the moon and the stars and declared it rad, and filled the sea with the fish and the air with the birds and declared them both rad. Then, God finally filled the land with animals, and declared them rad as well.

But God's creation was not complete yet. As a crowning achievement, God finished creation with one more piece, a crown jewel. This part of creation was going to be a little different than everything else; this creation would be

unique, and would complete the entirety of creation. *God created humanity in the divine image.* And then, after creating a man and a woman, God made a declaration about everything he had created: God declared it "very rad."

Unfortunately, this does not always seem like the world we live in. *Something* happened, and in that thing, the world moved from "very rad" to "much less rad." The people were in the garden, and a serpent started talking to them. The serpent told them to eat the fruit from the one tree God told them not to; when the woman pointed out it was a bad idea, the serpent told her, "you will be like God."

I wonder what that would be like! Think about the possibilities of

becoming like God. Think about what you could do! What would you do? Maybe you would fly around. Maybe you would shoot lasers from your eyes. Maybe you would feed everyone, or change the nutritional value of ice cream to make it the healthiest food in the world! Or maybe you would make a backyard filled with hundreds of puppies who love you so much that when they see you they run over and want you to play with them, but are also able to walk on their hind legs, and make food, and do your homework, and fix your car, and give really good massages.

I'm not sure, but I think the woman thought of the backyard with the puppies, because she ate from the fruit. The man ate from the fruit too. In eating from the fruit, the humans attempted to add "godlikeness" to their resume, and tried to change their status from "human" to "divine." They thought that being human was a position of *upward mobility*, where there was room to ascend, at the expense of how God had instructed them. Because they wanted to be like God, they reached out and *grasped* the fruit, directly violating what God had previously told them. They thought of the world like a giant game of "Chutes and Ladders," and hoped to find a fruit-shaped ladder that would help them win the game.

But these two are far from the only ones who can be seen grasping for divinity. This grasping can be seen throughout human history. It can happen in many different ways: grasping can be a false or misleading statement about someone behind their back, or can be a feeling of superiority over another person. This grasping happens over and over in relationships, as we try to make ourselves great at the expense of others. In the same way the man and the woman grasped at the fruit, you and I tend to grasp at the grade, job, or possession that we think will grant us God-like status.

A man named Paul writes a little about this in the book of Philippians. In this book, Paul was writing to members of a church in Philippi who were trying to live together well. Sometimes these

people had the tendency to be jerks to each other. They weren't always sweet to each other, and Paul had to remind them to not say mean things to each other, or to share their food, or even to stop ignoring certain people they should have been speaking to. They were trying, but they weren't necessarily living in the *best* ways.

So Paul reminded them of a story connected to the one I just shared with you. In Philippians 2, Paul tells a story of someone who, having been given the chance of making himself "like" God, made a better decision than the man and the woman from the first story:

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (ESV)

It's important to see the difference here between Jesus and the man and woman in the first story. While the woman and man wanted to ascend to the top of the ladder in order to be like God, Jesus chose a different way. He chose a better way. Jesus chose to humble himself *to the point of death on a cross*, rather than to attempt to grasp godlikeness. Jesus became a servant in his life, choosing downward mobility rather than to order others around as a cosmic boss. Jesus became a servant.

But Paul's retelling of the story does not end there. Paul continues by saying:

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In light of Jesus' servanthood, he became like God. The very thing the man and woman in the first story hoped to acquire became unattainable in their attempt; the very thing Jesus appeared to give up was the thing that he ended up with. In our daily lives, we share in the opportunity to make this decision. One can strive for godlikeness through upward mobility, whether that is rising in social status, gaining power over others through selfish and manipulative means, or speaking harshly and violently to those around us. On the other hand, one can also follow the lead of Jesus, and, rather than grasp for godlikeness, choose to serve both God and others.

I wonder what downward mobility looks like in twenty-first century Pasadena.

- Pastor Mackenzie Smith

In eating from the fruit, the humans attempted to add "godlikeness" to their resume, and tried to change their status from "human" to "divine." They thought that being human was a position of *upward mobility*, where there was room to ascend, at the expense of how God had instructed them.

PASADENA PRIMETIME'S

**KICK
OFF
2016**

Annual Snack & Dessert Potluck

Friday, January 8, 2016

6:57 pm in Gilmore Hall

It's time again for the Annual Snack & Dessert Potluck.

If you're age 55 or better, come hear about all the PrimeTime activities, day trips, and tours for 2016. Invite a friend for a fun-filled evening at PazNaz.

Please remember to bring a snack or dessert to share.

**RSVP to Sylva Hekimian at
shekimian@paznaz.org or 626.351.2426.**

Celebrating a New Life in Christ

Nine Baptismal Testimonies

Since the time of the early church, Christians all over the world have participated in the sacrament of baptism. In those early days, folks would fast and pray for 40 days in preparation for their baptism. When the day of baptism finally arrived, as the new believer entered the water they would take off their old outer clothing as a symbol of leaving their old life behind. As they came out of the water they were given a new white robe to symbolize their new life in Jesus Christ.

While some customs have changed over the centuries, the intent remains the same. There is nothing quite as exciting as celebrating publically the new life in Christ that people are confessing through the act of baptism.

On a bright Sunday morning, October 25, nine people – six on the Pasadena campus and three at the Valley Center campus – expressed their faith in Christ in the ritual of baptism. Here's a recapture of their testimonies of their faith in Christ:



Sherry Xiao

I learned about Christ and became a Christian during my childhood. Later, when I grew up, I faced many challenges and began to ask questions about my life. Sadly, I didn't choose God to be my savior or let God take control of my life. I relied on my own ego and lifted up the knowledge of this secular world. After many years of living a life

without true belief, I started to feel that without God, "I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind" – Ecclesiastes 1:14. Therefore, at this moment, I acknowledge my total weakness and ignorance as a human, give myself completely to God, and allow God to be my master and to take control of my life. I am no longer a slave of sin, but a servant of God.



Dylan Hannon

I have always believed that my worldly, material existence is incomplete. My belief in God as true, but abstract, has also been insufficient for my daily living and salvation. Today I choose to lay my sinful "old

self" to rest and proclaim Jesus Christ as my savior.



Michelle Wu

Today I stand here at this holy church to declare that I accept Jesus Christ and I desire to be baptized. What I'm doing now comes as a huge surprise to all my close friends. Before, I never accepted Christianity. I didn't believe in praying. I believed that I'm a very good and kind person and that I could take care of myself. Because of this mindset, I thought that Christianity was for people who were lonely or in need of help.

But now, I'm about to be baptized. The transformation from refusing to accept Christianity to becoming a Christian is an unbelievable miracle. The biggest factor and influence for my change is my sister, Rita. Ever since she became a Christian, she has been sharing the word of God with me. I always refused to accept it, but she never gave up and kept praying for me.

Even though I refused to accept the word of God, I began to try to know more about God. Finally, I found the truth. Jesus said that he is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him.

I know that God will never leave me and never gives up on me. He led my sister Rita to tell me: "You don't need to prepare yourself to believe in God, you just have to open your heart to him, then you will believe in him." Also, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."



Daniel Xiao

I always considered myself a Christian because of my parents' faith, but when I was about ten I started to question my beliefs. That is when I started reading the Bible. After reading the Bible, I had a better idea of who Christ is, and I wanted to become a follower of Christ. When we came to this church, I was really moved by Pastor Scott Daniels' words and the church in general. So after thinking

about it, I want to be baptized in this church and declare that I have become Jesus Christ's follower.



Gloria De Santis

I've been looking forward to this amazing moment for more than ten years. This is the most significant experience of my entire life. Thanks to Almighty God for allowing me to be baptized today.



Anne Roth

Last fall I got into my car to find that my radio settings were all messed up. In the process of resetting them, I came across a Christian radio station. I began listening to learn how to become a better mom. It immediately became the only station I listened to and I was completely convicted of my sin like never before. A few weeks later I got a call from Sunrise Preschool telling me that there was an opening for my daughter to be enrolled. She started going to school here and we began coming to church. I decided to get baptized to deepen my faith and to dedicate the rest of my life to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.



Andrew Callen & Matthew Ramey

Andrew and Matthew have both been raised as Christians, however they attended church irregularly and often only during holidays. As

Andrew was getting ready to start preschool his parents knew he would need a strong foundation and sought a faith based school for him. Finding Valley Center Preschool was truly a gift from God to their family.

Andrew has grown to know God's love more than his mother could imagine for a little boy. He comes home telling others of God, singing songs, and reciting bible verses. Most recently, Psalms 66:5, "Come and see the work of God."

Through the preschool the boys have come to find a home at PazNaz's Valley Center campus. Matthew has joined the youth group and has grown his own relationship

with God. Matthew requested to be baptized because he would "love to be closer to God and to show (his) little brother how important it is to have a relationship with God."



Cadence Ogden

I want to be baptized because I want to start a new life with God so I can renew myself in the hands of the Lord. More specifically, I decided to be baptized because I want to wash all the sin off of me and make my life more true to God. When I found out I could be baptized, I decided it was something I wanted to do because it's special to me. When I am baptized, I will show and tell that my love for God is so powerful that nothing could break it. I just want to show the world that I've been transformed into a "Brave, Pure, and True" human being and to show my love towards the Holy Spirit.

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;"

1 Corinthians 1:25-27

*Girlfriend to
Girlfriend*

Wednesdays
6:30-8:00 pm in Gilmore Hall
Starting January 6

ALL IN

BOOK BY MARK BATTERSON

Books will be available the first day of class.
There is a \$20 fee for materials. Scholarships are available.
Free Nursery, Children, and Youth Ministries start at 6:30 pm.

For more information, contact Sherry Kefalas
at kefaldasdesigns@gmail.com or 626.831.7590.

Women's Ministries Bible Study
Continuing Tuesday, January 5
Tuesdays from 9:30-11:30 am in Gilmore Hall



Beloved DISCIPLE

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JOHN

A New Men's Series

THE COMEBACK

IT'S NOT TOO LATE AND YOU'RE NEVER TOO FAR

WEDNESDAYS STARTING JANUARY 6
6:30 PM IN ROOM 246, REED HALL



Sometimes life hurts, but it is important to be reminded that God is in the business of restoration and providing fresh starts. This study will offer encouragement and a fresh perspective when dealing with hardships, disappointment, pain, grief, and past mistakes. Everybody needs a Comeback!



For more information, contact Pastor Joe Halbert at jhalbert@paznaz.org or 626.351.2421.



Friendsgiving

from Pastor Faith Romasco

Our lives are full of beautiful moments of joy; crisp morning walks, falling leaves, the crackle of a fresh log in the fireplace. Sometimes these moments go unnoticed or unappreciated. Sometimes these moments are hurried past; just specks as we travel from one place to another. It is easy to miss these opportunities for joy and reflection, easy to forget to give thanks for them.

Sometimes, we can treat Communion, or the Eucharist, like this, a small speck of time between the Sunday sermon and lunch. We hurry to pass the elements and move right past a significant moment.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them...
- Luke 22:19 NIV

In the original language of the text the phrase, 'gave thanks,' is translated *eucharisteo*. "The root word of *eucharisteo* is *charis*, meaning 'grace.' Jesus took the bread and saw it as *grace* and gave thanks. He took the bread and knew it to be a *gift* and gave thanks...*euCHARisteo* – the table of thanksgiving" (Ann Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts*).

PazNaz's twenty|30 community hosted Friendsgiving, a thanksgiving potluck meal at one giant table, so that we might take bread and give thanks together. Each of us was dependent on others and other meal dishes to make the evening complete. It felt good to need each other, to appreciate each other and the moments that were spent together. The food was delicious, a sweet and savory smorgasbord, and the gathering was a lovely time of connection and fellowship. There were children running in circles and laughter echoing down the hall.

The sweetest moment, full of joy and reflection, took place at the start of the meal. We gathered to pause and to give thanks, *eucharisteo*: to notice where we were, the people we were surrounded by, and to whom we belong. The children that were present also gave thanks, some participating in the Eucharist for the first time.

In Early Childhood, we learn about *eucharisteo* through the story of the Good Shepherd in Godly Play. In the story there are two green felt circles that rest side by side, almost touching. Atop the first circle are the Good Shepherd and his sheep. The Good Shepherd knows each of his sheep by name and each of the sheep know the sound of the Good Shepherd's voice. They follow him from atop one circle to atop the second, crossing where the circles almost touch. Atop the second circle is a

long table, the table of the Good Shepherd. Once the sheep have crossed, they gather around the table of the Good Shepherd. All the people of the world are invited to join the Good Shepherd at this table, to participate in *eucharisteo* for all of time, where there will always be enough and where there will be no more tears.

The space where the two circles almost touch is significant. The children often ask what makes the second circle different from the first, wondering where the circles really could be. Is the table a real table? Can they come close to the table like the sheep? Is the table on earth or is it in heaven? Perhaps the table is on earth and in heaven, in our homes and in our sanctuaries. The sheep know the sound of the Good Shepherd's voice and they follow him to the table of the Lord; the table of the Lord that was, the table of the Lord that is currently, and the table of the Lord that will be.

The Desert Mothers and Fathers, monastic Christian ascetics in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, wrote about the thin spaces, moments where heaven in all of its glory, reached down and kissed earth. That small space between the two circles, where the sheep cross over, is a thin space; it is the table of the Lord that is currently. Whenever we participate in *eucharisteo* we are inviting the presence of God to rush in and surprise us right where we are and just as we are, as sheep learning the sound of the Good Shepherd's voice. Taking the Eucharist then is no small moment to rush past or to move through without noticing its beauty.

While serving the Eucharist at Friendsgiving, one small child asked me what we were doing. "Why am I taking a piece of bread," and, "Why am I putting the bread into juice?" Taking the Eucharist together as a community was no

small moment for her, it was not a speck that she could pass by. It was significant and new. As grown-ups we can hurry past moments like these without stopping to notice their significance let alone explain them to a child. There were more people to serve, the food was getting cold, and I was tempted to keep moving instead of pausing to wonder with this child in the thin space of *eucharisteo*.

I paused, "Do you remember the story of the Good Shepherd?" She responded with a yes and the nod of her little head. "Do you remember the big table that all of the sheep gather around?" Another nod. "Well, this is one of those tables, a table of the Lord that is in between and right now, a thin space for God to reach down and touch earth with all of us here together giving thanks." This satisfied her curiosity and sparked her memory, "Ohhhh," she said and took of the bread and dipped the bread into the juice. I moved on to the next person and assumed that the conversation was over.

After the Eucharist we feasted, laughed, and played, while enjoying the presence of one another. What I paused to notice and appreciate about Friendsgiving was that the children were present for the whole evening; present, learning, participating, and asking questions. This is significant because when we provide space for children at the table and in our sanctuaries, they learn how to participate and ask questions about their developing faith. We model for them what it means to worship, to engage in community, and how to pause at significant moments instead of letting them go by unappreciated. Modeling is always more effective than telling. A child can be told what it means to engage their community, but it's not the same thing as watching it happen,

participating with help, and feeling the thin space of *eucharisteo*. Children are always absorbing more than we as grown-ups give them credit for; like this small child who could connect that the table she was at was a table just like the Disciples at the Last Supper and like the table of the Good Shepherd in heaven.

At Friendsgiving there were plenty of wiggles as well as activities and toys available for the children to play with after the meal. Among the activities were several Godly Play stories and all of the pieces that accompany them, including the Story of the Good Shepherd. After Friendsgiving was over, clean up started. During clean up the Story of the Good Shepherd was found, completely set up, table and all. However, there was one modification to the story set up that made it a moment to pause and appreciate: the table of the Good Shepherd was not placed atop the second circle as usual. The table had been placed so that it was bridging the two circles as the table of the Lord that is currently. This was the table that had been modeled for the children just moments ago, showing that a child had absorbed way more than just turkey.

Eucharisteo at Friendsgiving was a moment with a child and the twenty|30 community that I was glad I had not hurried past.

- Pastor Faith Romasco

While serving the Eucharist at Friendsgiving, one small child asked me what we were doing. "Why am I taking a piece of bread," and "why am I putting the bread into juice?" Taking the Eucharist together as a community was no small moment for her, it was not a speck that she could pass by.

Rooted

Wednesdays at 6:30 pm | Starting January 6

Women's Ministries: *Girlfriend to Girlfriend*

You are one decision away from a totally different life! Come learn what it means to go all in and all out for God by studying Mark Batterson's book, *All In*. Books will be available the first day of class. There is a \$20 fee for materials. Scholarships are available.

6:30 pm in Gilmore Hall

Contact Sherry Kefalas - 626.831.7590

Men's Ministries: *The Comeback*

Sometimes life hurts, but it is important to remember that God is in the business of restoration and providing fresh starts. This study will offer encouragement and a fresh perspective when dealing with hardships, disappointment, pain, grief, and past mistakes. Everybody needs a Comeback!

6:30 pm in Room 246, Reed Hall

Contact Pastor Joe Halbert - 626.351.2421

God's Healing for Life's Losses

When life's losses invade your world, learn how to face suffering with God. This will be a raw and honest study concerning suffering, loss, and grief from a Christian perspective. Ginny Pedrotti, a retired pastor/missionary will be teaching the grief recovery class. She longs for others to find hope and strength to go on with life, and to have a safe place in which to mourn.

6:30 pm in Room 247, Reed Hall

Contact Ginny Pedrotti - 626.446.5009

Restarting

Restarting is a revolutionary solution-based approach for building joy, receiving inner healing, and developing life-giving relationships. Advancing beyond traditional treatment, current support group methods, and secular or spiritual approaches to recovery, *Restarting* offers hope for those that have tried other approaches and still feel hurt, empty, and alone. Restart your recovery for the first time!

6:30 pm in Room 249, Reed Hall

Contact Maria Berbee - 626.319.9288

Armenian Christian Outreach

The Armenian Christian Outreach of PazNaz invites you for a time of prayer and Bible study on Wednesdays.

Prayer Meeting at 6:30 pm in Room 149B, Reed Hall

Bible Study at 7:30 pm in Room 146, Reed Hall

Contact Pastor Mano Agulian - 626.351.2471

Early Childhood

Birth-Kindergarten

Inviting children to discover for themselves that Jesus is at the center of God's great story of salvation—and at the center of their story too, through storytelling, play, music, and wonder.

6:30 pm in Arms Hall

Contact Pastor Faith Romasco - 626.351.2469

PazNaz Kids: C.O.W.

This winter, PazNaz Kids will learn how to *Echo the Story*. Join this group in grades 1-5 as they dive into the Bible in innovative and interactive ways! Each week PazNaz Kids will explore Bible stories while also participating in awesome worship, fun games, and crafts!

6:30 pm in Room 102, Lower Sanctuary

Contact Pastor Doug Ravasdy - 626.351.2456

Student Ministries

On Wednesday nights this winter, Student Ministries will be exploring what it means to follow Jesus in a complex world. If you are in 6th-12th grade, you are invited each week to a safe space to hang out with friends, play fun games, engage in worship, and have meaningful conversations about life and faith.

6:30 pm in Meguiar Youth Center

Contact Pastor Mackenzie Smith - 626.351.2441

Oasis Adult Ministry

Oasis is a ministry program for special needs teens and adults. This Winter, Oasis will be going through the book of Ephesians. Come for a time of food, fun, friendship, and learning from the apostle Paul through his words to the church in Ephesus.

6:30 pm in Room 115, Lower Sanctuary

Contact Pastor Julie Keith - 626.351.2485

Worship and Celebration Arts

The primary purpose of Worship and Celebration Arts is to lift high the name of Jesus and to glorify God through the gifts he has given you. You are needed! Come lift your voice and have fun with a great team in the Celebration Choir on Wednesday nights, and with the Sunrise Orchestra on Thursday evenings. Pick up a Worship and Celebration Arts brochure for more information.

Celebration Choir

Wednesday at 6:45 pm in Room 101, Sanctuary

Sunrise Orchestra

Thursday at 7:30 pm in Room 101, Sanctuary

Contact Pastor Alan De Vries - 626.351.2419